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These instances of carelessness are exceptions in Mr. Plumptre's work, which is generally done with great care and fidelity, and shows an accurate and scholarly acquaintance with the letter and the spirit of the original.

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6. — *Poems of JOHN JAMES PIATT.* Cincinnati: R. W. Carroll & Co. 1868. 12mo. pp. 231.

ONE of the dreams of our earlier horoscope-mongers was, that a poet should come out of the West, fashioned on a scale somewhat proportioned to our geographical pretensions. Our rivers, forests, mountains, cataracts, prairies, and inland seas were to find in him their antitype and voice. Shaggy he was to be, brown-fisted, careless of proprieties, unhampered by tradition, his Pegasus of the half-horse, half-alligator breed. By him at last the epos of the New World was to be fitly sung, the great tragi-comedy of democracy put upon the stage for all time. It was a cheap vision, for it cost no thought; and, like all judicious prophecy, it muffled itself from criticism in the loose drapery of its terms. Till the advent of this splendid apparition, who should dare affirm positively that he would never come? that, indeed, he was impossible? And yet his impossibility was demonstrable, nevertheless.

Supposing a great poet to be born in the West, though he would naturally levy upon what had always been familiar to his eyes for his images and illustrations, he would almost as certainly look for his ideal somewhere outside of the life that lay immediately about him. Life in its large sense, and not as it is temporarily modified by manners or politics, is the only subject of the poet; and though its elements lie always close at hand, yet in its unity it seems always infinitely distant, and the difference of angle at which it is seen in India and in Minnesota is almost inappreciable. Moreover, a rooted discontent seems always to underlie all great poetry, if it be not even the motive of it. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* paint manners that are only here and there incidentally true to the actual, but which in their larger truth had either never existed or had long since passed away. Had Dante's scope been narrowed to contemporary Italy, the *Divina Commedia* would have been a picture-book merely. But his theme was Man, and the vision that inspired him was of an Italy that never was nor could be, his political theories as abstract as those of Plato or Spinoza. Shakespeare shows us less of the England that then was than any other considerable poet of his time. The struggle of Goethe's whole life was to emancipate himself from Germany, and fill his lungs for once with a more universal air.

Yet there is always a flavor of the climate in these rare fruits, some gift of the sun peculiar to the region that ripened them. If we are ever to have a national poet, let us hope that his nationality will be of this subtle essence, something that shall make him unspeakably nearer to us, while it does not provincialize him for the rest of mankind. The popular recipe for compounding him would give us, perhaps, the most sublimely furnished bore in human annals. The novel aspects of life under our novel conditions may give some freshness of color to our literature; but democracy itself, which many seem to regard as the necessary *Lucina* of some new poetic birth, is altogether too abstract an influence to serve for any such purpose. If any American author may be looked on as in some sort the result of our social and political ideal, it is Emerson, who, in his emancipation from the traditional, in the irresponsible freedom of his speculation, and his faith in the absolute value of his own individuality, is certainly, to some extent, typical; but if ever author was inspired by the past, it is he, and he is as far as possible from the shaggy hero of prophecy. Of the sham-shaggy, who have tried the trick of Jacob upon us, we have had quite enough, and may safely doubt whether this satyr of masquerade is to be our representative singer. Were it so, it would not be greatly to the credit of democracy as an element of æsthetics. But we may safely hope for better things.

The themes of poetry have been pretty much the same from the first; and if a man should ever be born among us with a great imagination, and the gift of the right word, — for it is these, and not sublime spaces, that make a poet, — he will be original rather in spite of democracy than in consequence of it, and will owe his inspiration quite as much to the accumulations of the Old World as to the promises of the New. But for a long while yet the proper conditions will be wanting, not, perhaps, for the birth of such a man, but for his development and culture. At present, with the largest reading population in the world, perhaps no country ever offered less encouragement to the higher forms of art or the more thorough achievements of scholarship. Even were it not so, it would be idle to expect us to produce any literature so peculiarly our own as was the natural growth of ages less communicative, less open to every breath of foreign influence. Literature tends more and more to become a vast commonwealth, with no dividing lines of nationality. Any more *Cids*, or *Songs of Roland*, or *Nibelungens*, or *Kalewalas* are out of the question, — nay, anything at all like them; for the necessary insulation of race, of country, of religion, is impossible, even were it desirable. Journalism, translation, criticism, and facility of intercourse tend continually more and more to make the

thought and turn of expression in cultivated men identical all over the world. Whether we like it or not, the costume of mind and body is gradually becoming of one cut.

When, therefore, the young Lochinvar comes out of the West, his steed may be the best in all the wide border, but his pedigree will run back to Arabia, and there will be no cross of the saurian in him. *A priori*, we should expect of the young Western poet that he would aim rather at elegance and refinement than at a display of the rude vigor that is supposed to be his birthright; for to him culture will seem the ideal thing, and, in a country without a past, tradition will charm all the more that it speaks with a foreign accent, and stirs the gypsy blood of imagination. This was conspicuous in Mr. Howells, who has shown, perhaps, as remarkable an aptitude for a purely literary career as any author we have yet produced. It is characteristic also of Mr. Piatt, whom we like none the worse that he is perfectly civilized, and does not try to palm off upon us the stage *Metamora*, whose war-paint is ludicrously belied by his Caucasian features and gait. Yet there is something agreeably and unmistakably Western in him, for all that. "The Mower in Ohio," "The Pioneer's Chimney," "King's Tavern," "Riding to Vote," and other of his poems, are examples of what we mean. In these he shows that true poetic insight which creates the ideal under the common and familiar, which are but ribs of death to the unanointed eye. "The Pioneer's Chimney," especially, is a simple story, so simply told as to reach a natural dignity and pathos that interest and move us strongly. Without being in any sense an imitation of Wordsworth, it may compare favorably with the best narrative parts of "The Excursion." "The Mower in Ohio," also, has touches of singular beauty and tenderness. Indeed, throughout the volume, there is a pensiveness without despondency, as of Indian summer. In his general choice of subjects, and mode of treating them, we find a native sweetness and humanity, a domesticity of sentiment, that is very attractive. Whoever likes simple thoughts and feelings, simply expressed, as much as we do, will like this book. That there is a vein of subtilty, and an answerable grace of form and phrase, in Mr. Piatt, the charming little poem which we copy will show.

"SLEEP.

"The mist crawls over the River,  
Hiding the shore on either side;  
And, under the veiling mist forever,  
Neither hear we nor feel we the tide.

"But our skiff has the will of the River,  
Though nothing is seen to be passed;

Though the mist hide it forever, forever,  
The current is drawing as fast.

“ The matins sweet from the far-off town  
Fill the air with their beautiful dream ;  
The vespers were hushing the twilight down  
When we lost our oars in the stream.”

The volume is a very pretty one, and speaks well for Western printing and taste. It is to be reprinted here by Hurd and Houghton.

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7. — 1. *The Popham Colony*. A Discussion of its Historical Claims. With a Bibliography of the Subject. Boston: J. K. Wiggin and Lunt. 1866. 8vo. pp. 72.
  2. — *Boston Daily Advertiser*, September 1, 1868. Popham Celebration, 1868.
  3. — *Brunswick Telegraph*, September 4, 1868. Popham Celebration, 1868.

It is now six years since a new wonder appeared in the cosmography of our early New England history. The wise men of the East were the first to discover it, and, leaving their lumbering and ship-building, they followed the strange spectacle until it appeared to them to stand over a rocky peninsula at the mouth of the Kennebec River. Here they assembled, a great multitude which no man has numbered, on the 29th of August, 1862, and, with the solemn ritual of the Church of England, a formal oration, toasts, set speeches, and clam-bake, they celebrated the nativity of colonization on these New England shores.

It is little to the purpose of the present inquiry that historical inquirers in other localities did not see the appearance we have alluded to, — or that some resident observers regarded it as a meteor soon to burn itself out, and others as a will-o'-the-wisp to lead the unwary into bogs of delusion. Living beyond the charmed circle which was favorable for observation, our testimony respecting the fact and nature of this phenomenon would have little value. To the Eastern astrologers it was as plain as a pike-staff. It is also a matter of history that the Maine Historical Society has made the 29th of August a memorial day, and that, under its auspices, celebrations have been held upon the “sacred spot” on each recurring anniversary since 1862, at a season of the year when the baleful influence of the dog-star is in the ascendant.

The proceedings of the first celebration fill a volume of 512 pages ; and a bibliography of the literature on the subject, printed in 1866, contains the titles of ninety-eight pamphlets and separate articles, pro and con, which had been printed up to that time. The precise condi-